DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 270 683 CG 019 138

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TITLE A Blueprint for Futuristic Planning in Guidance Renewal for the Jefferson County Schools, Birmingham, Alabama.
PUB DATE [Apr 86]
NOTE 15p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Association for Counseling and Development (Los Angeles, CA, April 20-23, 1986). Charts contain small type.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Counseling Services; *Counselor Performance; Elementary Secondary Education; Long Range Planning; *Needs Assessment; *Professional Development; School Community Relationship; School Counseling; *School Counselors; *School Guidance
IDENTIFIERS Jefferson County Schools AL

ABSTRACT

A plan to update a county school system's school guidance professional development program is described. The "Counselors of Tomorrow" model served as the impetus for this plan. The process in which the school counselors participated is described and includes these steps: (1) counselors participated in a conference which culminated in the identification of lists of resources and knowledge bases necessary to function in this time of transition and set three goals for personal and professional development; (2) counselors participated in a second conference which produced a counselor skill assessment instrument; and (3) a counselor steering committee developed a plan for renewal. The renewal plan is described as including identification of needed skills, development of programs based on needs, scheduling of full-day meetings, involvement of community agencies, and evaluation of programs. It is stated that this approach serves as an educational accountability plan resulting in improved counselor performance. Satisfaction with this approach for receiving updated information and techniques, identifying community resources, and developing a better sense of collaboration between counselors and community groups is summarized. (ABL)

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A BLUEPRINT FOR FUTURISTIC PLANNING IN GUIDANCE RENEWAL FOR THE JEFFERSON COUNTY SCHOOLS BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

This article describes a plan for updating school guidance professional development programs. The plan includes a systematic procedure for determining needs through the identification of knowledge bases and skills, client needs and required resources.

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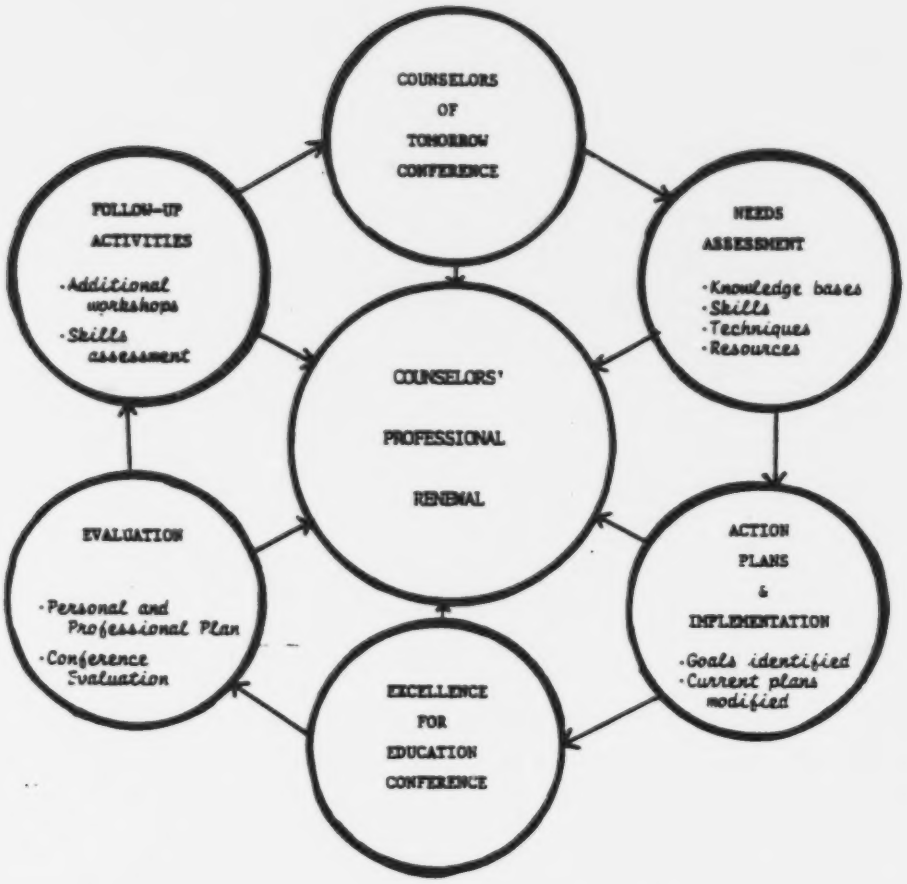
A BLUEPRINT FOR FUTURISTIC PLANNING IN GUIDANCE RENEWAL

For The

JEFFERSON COUNTY SCHOOLS

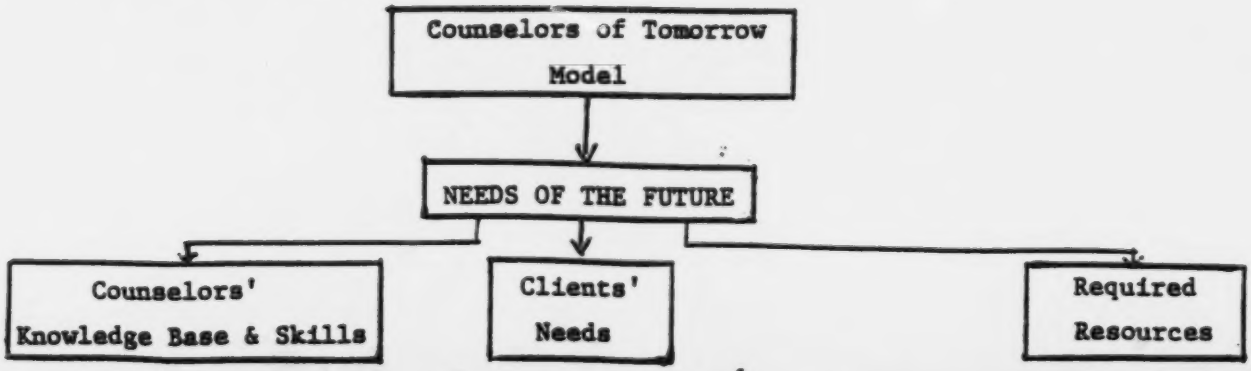


"Excellence in Education" and "futuristic planning" represent more than educational jargon for counselors in the Jefferson County School System. These views offer an innovative approach to guidance programs and services which are intended to help students learn more effectively and to develop skills necessary to meet life's challenges. Therefore, counselors must perform more actively as change agents and plan ahead toward new and improved initiatives in the pursuit of educational excellence.

Because of the increased attention to new knowledge bases and skills needed in the future, plans were made to involve counselors in program development which would improve performance competencies. Literature suggests that counselors of the future must:

1. become more aware of current and future trends necessary to function effectively;
2. be aware of personal and societal needs;
3. promote educational excellence through an understanding of how people learn, grow and develop;
4. identify resources (human, physical and financial) to implement guidance services;
5. improve and extend linkages with major school and community groups.

The initial conference, "Counselors of Tomorrow," generated an awareness of current trends and issues in guidance and counseling as described in the following illustration:



This model produced by AACES (American Association for Counselor Education and Supervision) was presented at the AACD conference in Houston, Texas in March, 1984. It was the impetus needed to set the Jefferson County Blueprint for Futuristic Planning in motion. Dr. Larry Osborne, a counselor educator from the University of North Carolina-Greensboro, presented the module in Texas and repeated the presentation to JefCoEd counselors in August, 1984. The model begins with a thought-provoking look at societal changes which are already being experienced. One is pushed mentally to probe into the future in order to anticipate the needs, knowledge bases and resources necessary to meet those needs. Dr. Osborne led the counselors through small group activities which at the end of the day culminated in the identification of lists of resources and knowledge bases necessary to function in this time of transition. Counselors then set three goals for personal and professional development which would enable them to perform proactively in the future.

After careful analysis, the lists began to reveal patterns and similarities which resulted in the development of a needs assessment instrument.

"New Directions: A Futuristic View of Guidance" was the second professional development conference for counselors. Renewal activities for this meeting focused on the State Plan for Excellence. The activities for the day included the following presentations:

- EDUCATION FOR EXCELLENCE - Dr. Eldon Johnson
  Alabama State Department of Education

  Dr. Johnson elaborated on the following sixteen (16) concepts which he cited as essential in the quest for educational excellence:

attitude	effort	energy	adaptability
loyalty	x-ray vision	be natural	need
commitment	competition	organization	love
expectation	enthusiasm*	foresight	learning

*"Enthusiasm," says Dr. Johnson, "Is what it's all about and it certainly makes the difference."

- A STATE FORECAST OF GUIDANCE - Dr. Barbara Bowden
  Alabama State Department of Education

  Dr. Teague's Plan for Excellence recognizes guidance as an essential service. The State Guidance Plan highlighted during this conference offers guidelines for establishing a comprehensive, developmentally oriented school guidance program.

- A PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION'S UPDATE AND OUTLOOK FOR GUIDANCE
  - Dr. Robert Comas
  The University of Alabama

  Dr. Comas challenged counselors to keep abreast of new skills and techniques through membership in professional organizations and by reading the most up-to-date literature. A listing of selected references was distributed to counselors along with a review of "In Search of Excellence" by Thomas J. Peters and Robert J. Waterman, and "Megatrends" by John Naisbitt.

- The culminating activity for this conference was the completion of the assessment instrument. It contained nine (9) general areas with sixty-one (61) specific skill subtopics. (Chart 1)

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Chart I

NAME _____

Guidance Department
JEFFERSON COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM
Birmingham, Alabama

A Checklist To Determine Knowledge Base And Skills Needed By Counselors

Please complete this form to indicate your needs for extending and enhancing your professional competencies. Use the following scale to prioritize:

Select three categories from the list on the left and prioritize by indicating "1" - high priority; "2" - medium priority and "3" - low priority.

Select now from the categories chosen, three topics on the right using the same rating as indicated above.

Category	Topics
*1 Counseling	5 behavioral modification 2 crises intervention 1 family dynamics 6 basic skill development theory 3 individual 4 group — other
*1 Group-process skills	2 behavioral techniques 4 human potential techniques 5 parent groups 1 personal awareness (i.e., value clarification) 3 small group counseling — other
— Policy and program information	— agency referrals — new staff/student orientation — program development — curriculum development — other
— Program management	— change-agent skills — evaluation of objectives and programs — writing objectives and goals — technological developments (i.e., computers, etc.)
— Consultation and communication skills	— with administrators — with agencies — with parents — with teachers — others
— Assessment	— statistics review — aptitude and achievement tests — general diagnostics — interest and aptitude tests — measurement theory — observational techniques — projective techniques — test-battery interpretation — program evaluation — other

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__ Health information

- __ basic medical terminology
- __ biofeedback techniques
- __ wholistic health approaches
- __ emotional disorders
- __ human sexuality
- __ mental dysfunctions
- __ physical disabilities
- __ sensory disabilities
- __ nutrition
- __ other

*1 Vocational and career development

- 1 career development
- 4 career guidance and career education
- 5 establishing a guidance center
- 4 placement and follow-up
- 6 self and career exploration
- 7 vocational and technical information
- 1 decision-making and goal setting

__ Substance abuse

- __ crises management
- __ drug abuse and alcoholism prevention
- __ outreach programs
- __ therapeutic communities and halfway houses
- __ other

__ Other

- __ sensitivity and flexibility
- __ human relations
- __ leadership
- __ interpersonal
- __ gerontology
- __ stress management in coping skills
- __ networking
- __ cultural plurism
- __ awareness/acceptance - handicapped
- __ environmental awareness
- __ use of leisure time
- __ creativity

Adapted from "Toward Updating and Renewal of Counselors," School Counselor, September 1977.

*These results reflect the individual preferences as well as group consensus.

Counselors worked individually and through group consensus to determine specific knowledge bases, skills and resources needed in preparation for the future. Needs were prioritized by counselors to determine the general areas and specific skill topics. General areas of high priority included counseling skills, vocational and career development and group process skills. Specific skill areas included family dynamics, individual and group techniques, decision-making and goal-setting, career development, guidance and education, personal awareness, human potential development, behavioral techniques and crises intervention.

The results of the survey were studied in several meetings of the staff and the Counselors' Steering Committee. The sessions focused on what could be done to make guidance in Jefferson County schools the force of the future. Based on the results of the needs assessment survey and a commitment to the Plan for Educational Excellence, "A Blueprint for Futuristic Planning for Guidance Renewal" was developed. The components of the plan included:

- Identification of general areas and specific skills needed by counselors based on the results of the survey;
- Development of programs based on the identified general and specific needs through experiential activities, demonstrations, and small group activities;
- Scheduling of full-day meetings to be held if possible in community facilities;
- Involvement of community agencies to serve as an important link for referral resources;
- Evaluation of each program.

The components of the blueprint were used to plan the next two conferences scheduled during the 1984-85 school year and in the future. The following is a detailed description of the plan consisting of five (5) major areas:

- IDENTIFICATION OF GENERAL AREAS AND SPECIFIC SKILLS NEEDED BY COUNSELORS BASED ON THE RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

  The following top priorities chosen by counselors were used in planning the remaining conferences for the year. They included:

  - General Areas
    - Counseling skills
    - Vocational and career development
    - Group process skills
  - Specific Skill Areas
    - Family dymanics
    - Individual and group techniques
    - Decision-making and goal-setting
    - Career development, guidance and education
    - Personal awareness
    - Human potential development
    - Behavioral techniques
    - Crises intervention

- DEVELOPMENT OF PROGRAMS BASED ON THE IDENTIFIED GENERAL AND SPECIAL NEEDS THROUGH EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVITIES, DEMONSTRATIONS, AND SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES

  The programs scheduled were:

  - Family Dynamics (Counseling and Therapy) - February 19, 1985
    - General discussion - Dr. William Crunk and Dr. Sam Gladding, UAB, presented up-to-date information on family dynamics and counseling and ways to strengthen the family unit.
    - Small group sessions - Eight (8) community agencies shared

ideas, services and techniques about child counseling, mental, physical and psychological services.

- Book display - Forty-eight (48) books on humanistic/transpersonal/transformational guidance and education were collected for examination by counselors.

- Vocational and Career Development - March 23, 1985

  Following the same format as the previous conferences, counselors will receive information on vocational and career development plans, participate in small group sessions with community agencies to explore specific areas of:

  - Career guidance and career education
  - Career assessment and instruments
  - Goal-setting and decision-making
  - Placement and follow-up
  - Use of a guidance center in career education

- SCHEDULING OF FULL-DAY MEETINGS TO BE HELD IF POSSIBLE IN COMMUNITY AGENCIES

  - Conferences were scheduled at the following facilities:
    - National Education Center
    - Botanical Gardens
    - Regis Inn
    - Dabbs Area Vocational Center

- INVOLVEMENT OF COMMUNITY AGENCIES TO SERVE AS AN IMPORTANT LINK TO THE PROGRAM

  - The following fourteen (14) agencies participated in the conferences:
    - The University of Alabama
    - The University of Alabama at Birmingham
    - Alabama State Department of Education
    - Smolian Clinic - Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
    - Adolescent Clinic
    - Children's Hospital, UAB
    - Hillcrest Child Adolescent Center

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- Child Mental Health Services
- Family and Child Services
- Hillcrest Family Center
- Cooper Green Hospital
- Jefferson County Department of Health
- United States Army
- Little Professor Book Center

EVALUATION OF PROGRAMS

The effectiveness of each conference was indicated by counselors through the following assessment instrument. (Chart 2)

Chart 2

Guidance Department
JEFFERSON COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM
Birmingham, Alabama

Date _____

Express your opinion by checking in the appropriate column after each category as it applies to this program.

	Outstanding 1	Above Average 2	Average 3	Below Average 4	Poor 5
1. Program format	___	___	___	___	___
2. Program content	___	___	___	___	___
3. Effectiveness of discussion(s)	___	___	___	___	___
4. Opportunities for participation	___	___	___	___	___
5. Relevancy of the topics discussed	___	___	___	___	___
6. Possibilities for application	___	___	___	___	___
7. Renewal and updating of professional knowledge and skills	___	___	___	___	___
8. Interest level and overall impressions	___	___	___	___	___

9. What were the strong points of the meeting?

10. What were the weak points of the meeting?

11. Comments: Praises, criticisms, portions of the meeting worthy of special mention. (Please continue on reverse side, if necessary.)

The results revealed that in six (6) areas, over 75% of the counselors rated the items above average to outstanding. Relevancy of topics (88%) was considered by counselors to be the greatest strength of the conferences. To a lesser degree, program content (84%) and updating of professional knowledge and skills (82%) were also considered as strengths of the conferences. A small percentage (7%) of counselors rated the programs average. Other areas of the assessment included program format (79%), effectiveness of discussions (81%) and possibilities for application (80%).

The evaluation further revealed that counselors were consistently positive about each conference. They indicated that this approach to professional development provides the competencies that can make the vision of the future a reality.

Some comments made by counselors relative to other strengths included:

"We have been informed of the latest developments."

"Topics were things we needed to know."

"Good to have this information to address crises areas in our school."

"Practical and workable."

"The speakers were experts in their fields."

"Speakers were real professionals who spoke with authority."

"Through this process, we have more information brought to us than we would be able to seek out individually."

"We got to participate actively."

"Opportunity to brainstorm."

"Feel that counselors had ample opportunity for input into inservice meetings."

There is little question of the counselors' need for professional development. In this article, we attempted to show how a school system can provide a futuristic plan which responds to identified needs. The approach serves as

an educational accountability plan that results in improved counselor performance. For us, it has provided the system with an approach for receiving a wealth of updated information and techniques, plus the identification of a wide variety of community resources and the development of a better sense of collaboration with counselors and community groups. We, in Jefferson County, feel that "futuristic planning in guidance can make a difference."

SPECIAL NOTE: This approach to professional development is made possible because of the support of the administration and approval by our Board of Education.

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